A

LETTER

From an

Anti-Hierarchical DIVINE

In the Countrey,

To a

Member of the Houſe of COMMONS.

Concerning the

BISHOPS

Being reſtored to their

Votes in PARLIAMENT.

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A Letter from an Anti-Hierarchical Divine in the Countrey, to a Member of the Houſe of Commons, concerning the Biſhops being reſtored to their Votes in Parliament.

Sir,

IT muſt needs ſeem ſtrange to you at the firſt ſight, to receive any thing from me in the behalf of thoſe Perſons, whom I have to bloud conſtantly oppoſed; and whom I yet think, for all their unexpected, and as they ſay, miraculous Reſtitution, to be neither *Jure Divino*, nor *Jure Apoſtolico*. Yet, conſidering that his Majeſty, in order to the ſupport and keeping up his own Intereſt in the State, as ſome conceive, hath introduced Biſhops again into the Church, to our no ſmall grief; who though at preſent they cannot exerciſe that arbitrary and unlimited Power, by vertue of the High Commiſſion, as formerly, yet have Authority ſufficient, by the aſſiſtance of the penal Laws, yet unrepealed, in all places, and by their large Royalties and ample Poſſeſſions in many places, to re-inforce (that, which all godly men juſtly enough decried formerly, as a ſoul-grieving Innovation, and little better than Popery it ſelf) a conformity to the (as we yet ſay) empty, and unſignificant

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Ceremonies of their pretended Church: The very Thought of which (was it not for His Majesties Gracious Declaration, and the Connivance of many honest and discreet Justices of the Peace, that are yet left in the Countrey) were sufficient to make us despond of the comfortable enjoying of our neerest and dearest Relations. But then her's the Misery, the King, as many say, can pardon, but for what concerns himself, according to that received Maxim, *The Legislater hath Authority to dispense with his own Laws for any Cause, provided, that no distinct Interest be prejudiced or injured*; & therefore he can reach no further in relation to the Non-reading the Book of Com. Prayer (a thing that we can never with any Credit or Reputation conform to) than the first time; for upon the second Conviction, the Patron may present, as if the Incumbent were already dead, and in that case it may easily be guessed, what most of us may expect; Neither can we hope for the Connivance of the Benchers long; for, as a little Leaven leavens the whole Masse, so one peevish person upon the Bench, is able to do us more hurt, than the whole number can do us good, & of this, there are some experiences near us. It must therefore, *Sir*, from hence of necessity follow, that either we must be brought to a carnal Complyance, which will be a Spirit troubling of many precious Saints amongst us, or else, as the lesser evil, leave our Native Countrey, and go to those Protestant Churches, beyond the Seas, where we may have the free exercise of Religion in its Primitive and Virgin-Purity. Now *Sir*, the face of things, as you know, being thus, I shall humbly propose to your wiser self, a thing that may enable us to a more comfortable support in a transmarine condition, if Providence should so order it, or else to a more chearful enduring, in relation to outwards, of Persecution at home. You see then that Bishops are restored to a power, (which I will not be positive in to determine they will exercise), to do hurt, it would not be amisse therefore, if the power whereby they may do good, *viz.* their Pretences to a Third Estate, and so consequently to a Vote in Parliament, were taken into seasonable and mature Consideration. It's true, at the beginning of the War, the King was confidently cried up by us to be the Third Estate, which some of them undiscreetly granted, thereby to make the King a co-ordinate Power, by which, to put the better

Vid. Stat. before the Com. Prayer.

Glosse

Gloſſe upon our Arming, for the aſſerting of the Authority of the two Houſes againſt His; and indeed much might yet be ſaid, in juſtification of the Late War, had the King been ſo. But now, *Sir*, upon ſecond thoughts, that Opinion appears to be very incongruous to the Fundamentals: For not only my Lord *Cook* ſaith, which is enough to confute any ſingle Authority, that the Biſhops are a third Eſtate, but the expreſs words of many Statutes are, that the three Eſtates of the Realm, are the Lords Spiritual, the Lords Temporal, and the Commons; and therefore it cannot well be denied, but that the Biſhops are a Third Eſtate, and accordingly they have acted ſince *Magna Charta*, and in the *Saxon* times too, as many ſay: But the Stories of thoſe times being uncertain, as filled up with Monkiſh Tales, much reſembling the *Theomachi* of the Giants before the *Theban* War, amongſt the *Grecians*, I ſhall wave, as not much material to the purpoſe. Well then, the Biſhops being an Eſtate, and likewiſe the Aſſent of all being as neceſſary too, as the *Veult le Roy*, to the compleating of an Act that ſhall be binding, againſt what may happen to Futurity, it muſt then follow, that it's requiſite for us, in order to our ſure and certain Peace, that they, as well as the other Lords, ſhould be reſtored to that which hath ſo long been their Rights; otherwiſe the Preſident, may, in time to come, be of dangerous Conſequence; for by the ſame Rule, that the Lords Temporal and Commons, by the Royal Aſſent, excluded the Biſhops; may the Lords exclude the Commons; nay, more juſtly may the King exclude all, and after the manner of the *Turkiſh* and *Ruſſian* Emperors, reduce our bravely Conſtituted *Monarchical*, into a *Deſpotical* Government. Miſtake me not all this while, for what I ſay, is not out of any reſpect to them, but to our ſelves: For we ſhall have as much, if not more advantage than any by their Reſtitution. For to ſay the Truth, at the beginning of the War, we were, you know, ſo tranſported with Zeal, of doing our Duty to God, as ſome holy men then thought, that we quite forgot our Allegiance to the Prince, and therefore we ſtand as much in need of a firm Act of Oblivion, in relation to the ſecure Enjoyment of the things of this Life, as of Gods Mercy, in order to the Fruition of a better. It will be therefore very unſafe for us, to have that Charter, under which we claim all that we have, or may pretend to, ſo ill fortified,

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fied, as by an Act that may be liable to a just Exception, as every Act must be, that is not ratified according to the Fundamental Constitutions of this Land: And who do you think canbe well satisfied with so contingent a security, as you see all security is, without the Bishops Assent? I know in Answer to this, it may be Objected, that there hath been several Acts of Parliament past, the Bishops being absent, the Authority of which was never yet disputed, as, 24 *Ed.* 1. 11. R. 2. and divers others, but then the *Bishops* neither by force, nor any pretended Act or Order from the other Estates, were kept out: But they being then in subjection to the Scarlet Whore, were kept out by a Canon or Command from the See of *Rome*, or else were absent upon Choyce, and therefore none of those Examples can in reason be alledged, to vindicate the forcible exclusion of them. Besides, it may deserve some Consideration, that the Act made 2 *H.*4. *Contra Hæreticos, & ex assensu Magnatum & aliorum Procerum*, the Commons either Absent, or excluded, was for that very reason long after, 25 *H.*8.C.14. repealed, as *Bagshaw* sayes in his Reading, whither I refer you. By this, you may see, *Sir*, that there is some possibility of hazard, though many years after, in relying upon any Act that's not made by the consent of the three Estates. All this considered, I shall propose this following, as the most convenient Expedient: Before you confirm the Act of Oblivion, let the Bishops be called in, that so there may be no just occasion of Cavil for the future: otherwise those men that will not bow the knee to *Baal*, that cannot conform to vain Habits and impertinent Ceremonies, cannot make a convenient Sale of their Lands, to enable to a Livelihood, amongst the *French* or *Helvetian* Churches: To which, if they do not forsake their first Love, and make shipwrack of their Faith, they must in reason be forc'd. For it's plain, if hereafter, the Act, for want of due Form be made null, all Estates that now are, or for many years ago were in our hands, will by the Letter of the Law be forfeited to the King, and we are not sure alwayes to have good Kings; but we are pretty sure, that there will alwaies be such Persons about the Court, as will be willing enough for their own Concerns, to find a Flaw in that Act, or any else. Besides, the Lawyers tell us, that no Obligation can be binding, that's entred into *per duresse* or *Minas*: Well

then,

then if at any time hereafter, a Prince ſhould hapen among us, that hath a mind to quarrel with all Acts made ſince the excluſion of the Biſhops, and alledge, that his Predeceſſor *Charles* the Firſt was threatned and forced to aſſent to that Act; and therefore the Act null: The ſad conſequence of which, is the fortfeiture of moſt places: we have reaſon to think, that there will be Lawyers enough found, to juſtifie any Authority, in a more unreaſonable thing, and ſo our Poſterity may hereafter be forced to buy their Lands at the Kings Price, if they have them: But leaſt I exceed the length of a Letter, I ſhall conclude in this, that the total Abolition of the Hierarchy is not ſo neceſſary, in order to a through Reformation in point of Diſcipline, as the reſtitution of the Biſhops to their Votes in the Upper Houſe, and their Conſent to the Act of Amneſty, is to the freeing of us from thoſe Jealouſies and Fears that otherwiſe may juſtly ariſe in relation to our Lives and Eſtates. Pardon me *Sir*, I am Yours,

P S.

FINIS.

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